(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) As explained above, the telecom tariffs are mostly under forbearance and various operators are free to provide services at competitive rates. Tariffs offered by Government PSU BSNL are reviewed from time to time on the basis of needs of the customers, prevailing market conditions and TRAI guidelines. The rates offered by BSNL for its mobile services are either cheaper or competitive to the tariff offered by private operators.

Disruptions of internet connectivity

2663. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Internet connectivity in India was severely hit due to disruptions of under-sea Internet carrying cables; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government to ensure uninterrupted Internet connectivity in such eventualities in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI JYOTIRADITYA MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) Yes, Sir. Internet connectivity was affected as one international under-sea cable system near Malaysia and two international under-sea cable systems near Egypt broke down in the month of January, 2008.

(b) International Long Distance (ILD) sector has been liberalized. International Long Distance (ILD) service providers are permitted to make techno commercial agreement to provide restoration capacity on alternate submarine cable systems to meet such eventualities. Further, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has already issued regulations "International Telecommunication Access to Essential Facilities at Cable Landing Stations Regulations, 2007" for access facilitation to the essential facilities at cable landing station.

Development of North East

2664. SHRI PENUMALLI MADHU: Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is ready to declare North East as a priority region for development; and

(b) if not, the alternative measures being taken up by Government to arrest disruptive and violent activities in Assam, Manipur and Bangladesh territories?

THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) The Central Government has been according priority to the holistic development of the North-East Region. In this regard some important measures that have been taken are:

- All the eight North Eastern States are treated as Special Category States.
- Since 1998-99, the Central Ministries, except those which are specifically exempted, are required to earmark at least 10% of their GBS for the North-East Region.
- The Government has set up a Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) out of the unspent balance of Central Ministries from their mandatory allocation for

the NER. The Government allocates funds from the NLCPR for infrastructure development in the NER.

- The North Eastern Council, a Statutory body, is allocated a budget for taking up projects of regional nature in the NER.
- The Government has notified the North East Industrial Investment & Promotion Policy (NEIIPP), 2007 for promoting industrial development in the Region.

Schemes of NEC and NLCPR

2665. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

(a) the names of schemes selected for implementation in different States in respect of NEC and NLCPR funds during the year 2006-07 and 2007-08;

(b) the number and details of these projects that have been provided with funds effectively;

(c) whether Government is aware that the progress of works in many cases is getting stalled for want of proper monitoring system; and

(d) if yes, the steps to be taken to clear the bottlenecks?

THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) The nemes of schemes and projects selected for implementation in different North Eastern States in respect of NEC and funds provided during the year 2006-07 and 2007-08 are enclosed at Annexure 'A' & 'B' respectively. [*See* Appendix 213 Annexure No. 10]. The names of the projects selected/sanctioned in different North Eastern States under NLCPR during 2006-07 and 2007-08 and funds released in these projects is available on this Ministry's website *www.mdoner.nic.in.*

(c) and (d) Schemes under NEC & NLCPR are being systematically monitored regularly with on going efforts to make the monitoring system as effective as possible and speed up the progress of works.

Expansion of various programmes in hilly areas

2666. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

(a) the programme of Government to encourage the States of the North-Eastern in bringing more hilly areas under the expansion of horticulture, tea plantation, rubber plantation etc. during the year 2006-07 and 2007-08.

(b) in what maner the NEC and NLCPR funds are going to support the State Governments in this mission and how far the achievements have been made so far; and

(c) if there has been no programmes as yet, whether steps would be taken in the line?

THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) The line Ministries of the Central Government and their